United Nations A/HRC/29/NGO/64

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 June 2015

English only

Human Rights Council
Twenty-ninth session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-09149 (E)
1509149

Please recycle

Discrimination against women in the I. R. of Iran: women & employment

Iran is one of the oldest members of International Labour Organisation (ILO), which implies non-discrimination between men and women in employment in the labour market. This report highlights the case of women specialist care doctors, who are treated differently than their male counterparts in employment due to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education regulations. It also refers to gender quota on the initial phase of employment in the government agencies and the problems that ensues for women.

1-Women specialist care doctors

In 2003, during the first term of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency, "women's scheme", was presented to the parliament on the situation of female medical doctors after they complete their specialist courses in the state-owned establishments. According to this bill, women who specialised in a field, had to work at the state-owned hospitals in the deprived regions of the country far from their home towns for a duration twice or thrice the years they had spent to specialise in that field. This bill passed by the parliament without delay though with some legal loopholes.

Up to the present time, over ten thousand female doctors had been stationed outside their home towns for up to 8-12 years. To live and work outside home environment and in extreme conditions has created many problems for these young women doctors. Lack of opportunity to get married and have a family or worse taking their family with them (if the husband approves) is among them. In some cases women doctors had been diagnosed with depression due to harsh working conditions "in exile" and lack of support from family and friends.

In 2006, "women's scheme" faced opposition among female doctors on grounds of discrimination against them. According to this 'scheme', young female doctors, who enrolled to specialise in a field, had to sign a form, giving the Ministry of Health and Medical Education authorisation to send them away to the deprived regions for up to 12 years during which their licence was held until the end of this term. Male doctors objected to this scheme and their term was reduced to 2 years.

In the autumn of 2007, more than 50 women and men specialist care doctors assembled in front of the parliament to demonstrate against the directive. Special security guards and intelligence soon arrived and detained 3 women doctors and 1 man.

In 2008, a number of women doctors sought legal advice and challenged some of the articles in the "women's scheme", and urged their deletion from the Ministry of Health's organisational chart. Shortly afterwards, the intelligence got involved and the legal challenge file was dumped in the judiciary rooms,[1] while little hope of any reform to the bill remained in the horizon.

In 2014, about 300 women doctors assembled in front of the ministry and raised the issue once again. The ministry officials rejected their case on the grounds that "they have signed a contract" to work in deprived regions thrice the education period.[2]

During Hassan Rowhani presidency this course of action took a turn to the worse. Dr Seyed Hassan Hashemi, Minister for Health and Medical Education issued a directive and banned female doctors who worked at the state-owned hospitals to have private practice after office hours. Once again, this directive faced opposition and demonstrations in front of the ministry of health, hence detention of a number of doctors and the silence thereafter.

[1] http //just1 persianblog ir/post/1705/

[2] http //www jamejamonline ir/newspreview/1506360619101087829

At present, a large number of female doctors are forced to work at the state-owned hospitals on low wage of 1,100-800 Euros a month and had been forced to close down their private practice or work in male colleagues' practices in secret.

Due to the large number of female students in medical schools, the ministry of health and medical education has proposed a bill to the parliament to increase the male quota in the specialised fields to 70%, hence reducing the number of female candidates who pass through the tough exams.

2- **Regulations to enhance inequality**

Women and civil society activists demand Iran joins the CEDAW. However the vice president to "Women and Family", Ms Shahindokht Molaverdi has reiterated the importance of improving women's place within the family institution: "One of the priorities of this government is the legal and religious rights of women."[3]

This strategy is displayed in the guideline booklet for employment throughout the government organisations. The strategy of driving women from employment market is also implemented through the reduction of working hours, increasing maternity leave without job security and the policy of population increase. According to the government strategists and the supreme leader, women must take responsibility for the population increase and unemployment crisis.[4]

In the report presented by the Iranian government to the CSW59/Beijin+20, the official policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on gender justice and opposing gender equality is obvious.[5]

In 2015, of 2,800 vacancies at the government agencies, 2,284 were allocated to men, 500 between men and women and only 16 places were given to women.[6]

This is despite Iran's supporting the recommendations of Yemen, Algeria, Bhutan, Djibouti and Ethiopia during the second cycle of UPR on empowerment and employment of women.

A report had been published by some press on the "sustainable employment for women" drawn by Ms Molaverdi. However, there are no further reports on its development. To reduce and eliminate discrimination against women requires the participation of activists and the society at large. Unfortunately, the only specialised magazine on women issues "Women Today" had been ordered to be closed down after only one year publication by the Press Supervisory Council, so women activists have little voice on the issues concerning women discrimination.

Conclusion:

Discrimination against women in Iran is imbedded in law and practice. In recent years and against the increase in the number of educated women who are aware of their rights, and the establishment of a deputy for women & family within the government, further bills and directives have sustained the practice of inequality and discrimination against women. Iran is about to join the executive body of UN Women, an institute whose sole aim is the promotion of equality and the elimination of violence against women.

By joining such a unique body, we demand Iran join the CEDAW and adhere to its contents both in law and practice.

---

[3] http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/483228

[4] http://www.roozonline.com/persian/news/newsitem/article/-157dd46d50.html

[5] http://women.gov.ir/Portal/home/?news/69029/108860/114182/

[6] http://www.feministschool.com/spip.php?article7701